

A D V I C E 3

FROM A

Pam 95

COUNTRY-CLERGYMAN

TO HIS

†

PARISHIONERS.

I N

T W O S E R M O N S,

P R E A C H E D O N

St. THOMAS's DAY, 1781 and 1782,

Previous to an annual Distribution of Bread and Meat.

To which are added,

T W O S E R M O N S

O N

P U B L I C W O R S H I P.

L O N D O N:

Printed by BAKER and GALABIN,

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE same reason which prompted the author of the following sheets to write, has determined him to print them. His only motive in either case, was to do good. To instruct those, who, being the more numerous part of his parishioners, have a sort of superior claim to his attention.

He has therefore rather endeavoured to be clear, than elegant: and has thought it necessary to hint by way of Advertisement, that the subsequent remarks were sent to the press, in the exact form they were delivered: instead of being digested, or arranged into an essay, or one single discourse, as was once intended. The author hoping, that by offering them in short, and separate discourses, they may be the oftener repeated, and more easily remembered. And should any be persuaded by this humble attempt, to think seriously of their duty to God, and to study the

means of procuring their eternal salvation, every end of his will be answered.

N. B. It is recommended to the readers, whenever they meet with a passage taken out of the scriptures, immediately to turn to it, and endeavour themselves to apply it; both with regard to its connection with the context in the original, and with that in the following treatise; by which they will learn to digest what they read, and will become better acquainted with the book of life.

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S E R M O N I.

II. C O R. V. CHAP. 10 and 11 Verses.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.——

BEFORE I offer any reflections on these words, I shall mention my reason for addressing you at present.

The office of a minister of the gospel is of the highest importance: to mankind in general; to himself in particular. He is not only to inculcate good doctrine from the pulpit, but ought also, if need require, privately to instruct, and endeavour as much as possible, to exemplify his doctrine by his life.

It is easier to comply with the first of these duties, than with the two latter. The common daily avo-

cations seldom or never afford any opportunity of giving or receiving private instruction, unless a particular flagrancy of vice, chance to render it indispensable.

Again, however our duty may urge the necessity of intimating the danger of sinful practices; I am afraid, that were we to attempt it, the generality of mankind, especially they who imagine themselves our superiors, would deem us impertinently officious and assuming. I cannot avoid acknowledging, that a consciousness of our own fallibility may often divert us from pursuing such a conduct. Nevertheless, there may be times and opportunities, suitable for the exercise of this duty, and whenever they offer, we ought to make a proper use of them.

"Not as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

As to the third and last point, namely, a life in every respect congruous to our doctrine, many obstacles concur to make it extremely difficult, if not altogether unattainable. Many, to which ourselves do not contribute in the smallest degree. But, knowing how much precept is enlightened and aided by example, that the latter is often the more prevalent; it is doubly incumbent on us ^a *to suffer*
all

^a Colossians iii. 22.

^b 1 Corinthians, ix. 12.

“all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ?”

There is great need that we should pour forth our sincerest solicitations to Almighty God, and intreat the constant prayers of those to whom we are sent, that while we are preaching to others, we may not ourselves incur the divine displeasure.

Thus there are difficulties attending private admonition, and if I may so call it, exemplary advice. There is no way left us then of discharging our duty inoffensively and undauntedly but by public exhortation.

That I may be as little deficient as possible, in what I look upon to be my particular duty to you, I have seized the present occasion of offering you some advice. And must observe with concern, that which made it appear peculiarly necessary, was, the great neglect I have perceived, in your attendance at this House of worship. I fear I may venture to say, half of those now present, are strangers to this place at all other times. Whence it is no breach of charity to infer, that you are drawn hither at present by some stronger allure-ment, than that of worshipping your Almighty Creator. And that what our Saviour said to the Jews at Capernaum, may be applied to you ;

“Verily, Verily, I say unto you ; ye seek me, not be-

“ cause

"cause ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." You are not come hither to day, to prostrate yourselves before your eternal Judge, to implore forgiveness of your numberless offences, and to promise, by the assistance of his grace, amendment for the future; but merely for the sake of receiving that charity, which is rather liberally, than judiciously bestowed.

Nor do I by this supposition, offer you any injustice; because it is founded on that by which alone you can become liable to censure,—your constant behaviour. By this one sin of profaning the sabbath, or which is the same thing, of not keeping it holy, of not fulfilling the purposes for which it was instituted, nor passing it in a becoming manner: in short, by absenting yourselves at all times from the Lord's Temple; you put it out of your power to perform your duty to God, because you wilfully remain ignorant of it.

Some for this neglect may attempt to make excuses; and some may think even that unnecessary. But I shall hope to convince you in the following discourse, that no excuse can be sufficient, and that by a life of impiety, you certainly endanger the future welfare of your immortal souls. I shall now immediately proceed to some reflections on the words of the text; which were, *"For we must all appear*

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“ appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ, that
 “ every one may receive the things done in his body, ac-
 “ cording to that he hath done, whether it be good or
 “ bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,
 “ we persuade men.”

That there is a life after the present, is a truth so instinctively impressed, so wrought almost by nature on the mind, that I cannot believe any one ever yet died, under the persuasion of being annihilated, of sinking into nothing. It is a prospect, at which human nature in its most uncivilized state, must shudder. It is a prospect, to which I believe no human Being looks forward. Revelation has unfolded to us the certainty of our exchanging this life for another. Think seriously of this. Not only now, but often. Let it remain constantly in your memories. Make it the ruling principle of your lives. It is the support of religion. It is the foundation of the Gospel. It is the doctrine of Him, who by his own resurrection brought life and immortality to light.

Persuaded that the moment we leave this world, we shall be called into a new Being; it is natural we should be anxious concerning the wonderful and important change that is to be wrought on us: that we should look on the consequences of such an event, as worthy our most serious consideration.

Were

Were we totally ignorant of what is to follow, there might be some excuse for our inattention; since doubt is apt to beget languor and remissness. But, when we are assured from the Scripture, emphatically stiled the Word of God, that "*We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ,*" there to undergo a most strict and impartial examination, "*that every one may receive the things done in his body,*" "*according to that he hath done, whether it be good*" "*or bad,*" when we are told from such authority, that this will really be the case, it seems impossible that any one can be indifferent as to the issue.

"*It is appointed for all men,* says St. Paul, *once to die, but after this the Judgement.*" We must all die, and "*we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.*" At that awful and decisive tribunal, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, every action weighed, and "*every idle word*" put into the scale of our iniquity, what must they expect, who have scarce thought these solemn truths worth their notice? Who have either endeavoured not to believe them, or which is worse, have believed and disregarded them? "*If ye were blind,*" says our Saviour to the Pharisees, *ye should have no sin, but since ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth.*" If God had left you ignorant of your

• Hebrews ix. 27. † Matthew xii. 36. ‡ John ix. 41.

your duty, had He never revealed his will to you, nor told you plainly, what He expected from you; had He never warned you of the danger of sin, nor shown you how you may avoid it; you would then have had some plea for your errors. But, since God sent his Son into the world, to teach, and to save sinners who repent; since you cannot but acknowledge that you have the means of salvation clearly pointed out to you, and yet refuse to accept or use them, therefore your sin remains unpardonable and without excuse.

Hear in what manner the day of Judgement is represented in the Revelation of St. John, "*I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face, the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man, according to their works; And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.*"

Hear

Hear also in what manner the Saviour of the world
 prophecies of that great and terrible day. *John v. 29*
 " rily, Verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming,
 " and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the
 " Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the
 " Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the
 " Son to have life in Himself. And hath given Him
 " authority to execute judgement also, because he is the
 " Son of Man. Marvel not at this, for the hour is
 " coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall
 " hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have
 " done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that
 " have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

What the punishment allotted to the wicked will
 be, we cannot tell: it is one of those " Secret
 " things belonging unto the Lord our God," which
 He has not thought proper to reveal to us, because
 to know it, would be of no manner of use to us. But
 He has assured us, that whatever it is, it will last
 for ever. " * When the Son of Man shall come in his
 " Glory, and all the holy Angels with Him, then He
 " shall sit upon the throne of his glory. And before Him
 " shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate
 " them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his
 " sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on
 " his right hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall
 " the King say unto them on his right hand, come ye
 " blessed

¹ John v. 25.

^{*} Matthew xxv. 31.

" Blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared
 " for you from the beginning of the World. Then shall
 " He say also to them on his left hand, depart from me
 " ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil
 " and his angels. And these shall go away into ever-
 " lasting punishment, but the righteous into life eter-
 " nal."

The trial which is to determine our everlasting
 fate, which will consign us to one of these two
 states, a state of eternal and complete happiness,
 or unceasing and incomprehensible misery, will be
 a trial of justice and impartiality. Where, " every
 " one will receive the things done in his body, according
 " to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." It
 will there be impossible for us to shade our guilt,
 or by any artifice to palliate or lessen our offences.
 We shall not then be judged according as we have
 believed, but according to what we have done.
 Every word, and every action will be brought into
 the account. Be not deceived; it will not then be
 a sufficient plea, that we have all along believed in
 the Father and in the Son, if we have not added
 practice to our faith, and obeyed their command-
 ments. This too we are taught by the Son of God
 himself. " ¹ Many will say unto me in that day (speak-
 " ing of the day of Judgement) Lord, Lord, have we
 " not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out
 B " devils?

¹ Matthew vii. 22.

“ devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
 “ And then I will profess unto them; I never knew
 “ you, depart from me ye that work iniquity.”

Such is the prospect to those who pass their days in an uninterrupted course of slothful impiety; in a continual round of inattention, to those things which are most profitable for them. Dead and lost to every thing that makes them worthy the name of Christian or of man. Who are not to be awakened out of their slumber, till the dreadful summons arrives. “^m *This night shall thy soul be required of thee;*” and who then think, by a few pious ejaculations, to make amends for a life of thoughtlessness and sin, and to obtain those rewards which alone are promised to the pure in heart.

How such a conduct, and such expectation can be reconcileable, is hard to conceive. By reason it never can. Was it for this, that the Lord God said, “ⁿ *Let us make man in our own image? and that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life?*” Was it for this, that he gave him “*dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth?*” that He made the whole creation subservient to him? And lastly, when all these transcendant marks of divine favour

^m Luke xii. 20. ⁿ Genesis i. 26.

favour were insufficient to restrain him from sin; was it for this, that the Almighty and merciful God, gave his only Son, as at this time to take our nature upon Him, that by the most painful and ignominious death, He might redeem us from the bondage of sin, and procure us the means of returning to a state of innocence and happiness? Lay aside the former considerations, and reflect only on this last instance of God's mercy and love towards us, and ask yourselves, with what pretence they can expect the intercession of Jesus Christ, who have scarce ever complied with one of his precepts? Who have utterly neglected to fulfill those conditions on which alone can depend their hopes of the mediation of the Son of God? "*He that bath my commandments,*" says the blessed Jesus "*and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*" And again, "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, bath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.*"

Such is the doctrine of the Gospel. These are not points of mere speculation. No suggestions of ours: no Anathemas thundered out by the clergy, to keep their flocks in superstitious awe, and blind submission to themselves. They are not arguments

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• John xiv. 21. P John xii. 48.

deduced from the word of God; but the word itself. They are, as St. Paul calls them, "*the terror of the Lord*;" and knowing, that is believing them, says the Apostle, "*we persuade men.*"

But, what weightier arguments can we make use of than the words themselves? What keener menaces can there be, than the threats which are denounced in Scripture against the disobedient? What stronger inducements to piety, than the promises which are there made, to those who love God, and serve Him? Both equally certain: both equally to be depended on. For, "*God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?*"

Let me beseech you to consider what has been said. And delay not the hour of amendment, till your very repentance will be a reproach to you. Let God have the honour and praise which is due to Him, and worship Him, while it is in your power to offer Him that reasonable sacrifice, of health, strength, and inclination. Think not that there can be any virtue in those prayers, which are the last efforts of a mind filled with fear at its approaching dissolution, and tottering on the brink
of

of eternity: nor that there is any merit in being religious, when it is no longer in your power to be otherwise. Consider what numbers are snatched away by the sudden stroke of death, before they have time to give the smallest intimation of their belief, or to utter the shortest petition for mercy.

Begin then from this moment; and as the foundation of future obedience, determine to let nothing prevent you from being constant in your attendance at church. Make no frivolous excuses of business, of distance, much less, of idleness. There is certainly sufficient time for all things, and we are not to suffer the business of this world to interfere with that of the next.

“ *Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.*” Remember it is a day which God has set apart for Himself: and be assured that as long as you live in open contempt, and neglect of that day, you are adding to the measure of your iniquity, and kindling the wrath of God against you.

This is one of the Seasons which seem particularly adapted to works of repentance and amendment. It is the time in which He who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, first made his appearance on the earth. And what time can be more proper for the contemplation of these inesti-

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Exodus xx. 8.

mable benefits? What time has a greater claim for the particular exercise of those heavenly virtues, gratitude and love? How can we better employ this holy season, than in a review of our past lives, in bending our knees towards God, to implore his forgiveness of our past offences, and in devoting the remainder of our lives to his service?

Let us supplicate the assistance of the divine grace, to strengthen such pious resolutions; and let me hope that you will all seal them, by the reception of the holy Sacrament, at the approaching festival.

Meantime, if any of you have any doubts concerning the propriety of this compliance, or in any other respect, come to me; and I shall sincerely do my endeavours, by the blessing of Almighty God, to give you comfort and satisfaction.

"As we therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us walk in Him; rooted and built up in Him; and stablished in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Colossians ii. 6.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ROMANS X. CHAP. and the I. Verse.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they might be saved.

FINDING, or at least flattering myself, that my exhortations have not been entirely useless, I am induced to offer you some farther advice. I mean to address myself to all; but particularly to those (and I am afraid such are still the greater number now present) who seldom come to this place from motives of piety. Let me therefore beg your attention to a few observations, the result of my solicitude for you; containing in part a discharge of my duty, and to which it will be your indispensable duty to conform.

Such is the importance of the commission with which we are invested; even to be "*messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord, to teach and to promonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family*" that I should be most criminally neglectful of my solemn promise

promise to perform this office, if I perceived unconcerned, the very great disregard for the public worship of God, prevalent among those who ought to form the constant community of this Church.

So very much depends on the disposition of the hearer, that with all the care and attention of the teacher, it is impossible to make men holy, unless themselves have a desire to be taught, and are willing to put in practice the lessons they receive. And therefore it was not without reason, that St. Paul not only solicits for himself, the ^a prayers of those to whom he was sent, but also pours forth his own prayers for them, that they might profit by his instructions, and be excited to work out their own salvation. "*Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they might be saved.*"

Thus in either case, considering the importance of the ministerial office, and the general lukewarmness for religion almost every where perceivable, has every preacher of the Gospel reason to supplicate the divine assistance, for himself, and for others.

There is a beautiful and edifying example of that thirst after the knowledge of God, (without which all instruction is lost) and of the benefits generally procured

^a Ephesians vi. 18, 19.

procured by it, in the account of the Eunuch, (mentioned in the eighth Chapter of the Acts;) to whom Philip the Apostle was particularly sent. He was returning from Jerusalem, where he had been to worship, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the Prophet. *"Then said the Spirit unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to Him, and heard Him read the Prophet Esaias, and said, understandest thou what thou readeest? And He said, how can I except some man should guide me? And He desired Philip that He would come up and sit with him."*

The first circumstance to be noted in this story, is the piety, the devotion, the sincerity of the Eunuch: his disposition to study, his desire to be acquainted with his duty, his readiness to be instructed in those things, by which he might secure his eternal salvation. And thence we learn in the second place, that *"^b To Him that bath, shall be given. He that seeketh, shall find, and to Him that knocketh, it shall be opened."* To him who has good principles, and a love for virtue; strength of faith, and strength of mind to conquer temptations shall be added: and He who is desirous to learn, shall never want the opportunity and means of being taught.

Philip

^b Matthew vii. 8. Luke viii. 18.

Philip was miraculously sent to instruct the Eunuch; who, from the conviction He received at the Apostle's explanation of the Prophet, eagerly desired to be baptized at the first water they came to. And thus having entered under the banner of Jesus Christ, with a mind reconciled and happy "*He went on his way rejoicing.*"

The means of salvation have been miraculously obtained for all men, by Him who laid down his life a ransom for all. That is, for all who believe in the efficacy of those means, and trust implicitly to them, "*For the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

Thus is faith the foundation of the Gospel. But, as the Apostle adds in the same Chapter, "*How shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard?*" It is not merely saying, I believe in Jesus Christ, that will save me, if I show by every one of my actions, that I am totally ignorant, or which is worse, regardless, both of Him, and his commandments.

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^c Romans x. 8, 9.

^d Verse 14.

They who wilfully keep themselves in ignorance, who suffer every opportunity of acquainting themselves with their duty to pass by them; who instead of being anxious and inquisitive, are indifferent and careless concerning the future state of their immortal souls: what can such expect at that hour, when "*every one shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour?*" when to them we are assured "*who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,*" shall be granted "*eternal life;*" "*but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,*" shall be poured out "*indignation and wrath.*"

If to these thoughtless, unhappy Christians (for so many call themselves, who have no title to the name) the question should be put, Do you know, or do you understand any part of your duty to God? You say, You believe in Jesus Christ, but do you know why? They could not with equal propriety make the same answer the Eunuch made to Philip, "*How should we, unless some man should guide us?*" because it is plain they have no wish to be guided. Their only answer could be, we do not know, nor do we think it worth our while to be informed.

This

* Corinthians iii. 8.

† Romans ii. 7, 8.

This I hope is by no means the case of any present. But I should in charity suppose, that you do not sufficiently consider, how much it is your duty and interest, to make yourselves acquainted with the law of God, and to live conformably to it. You are not aware of the benefits, present and future, which are to be derived from such a pursuit, nor of the punishment that will most certainly be the portion of those who neglect it.

On these subjects then I mean to discourse as briefly as possible. And, first,

It is both your duty and interest to make yourselves acquainted with the law of God, and to live conformably to it, because by it you will be judged. It is your duty, because the God who created you; that God in whom “^e *we all live, and move, and have our being,*” who has power to save and to kill, to confer life and to destroy it; He who having laid on his creatures certain restrictions, and given us rules of conduct, calculated for the good and happiness of all, has therefore strictly enjoined us to comply with them. Every blessing we enjoy, the daily food that we eat, the raiment with which we are clothed, must be referred ultimately to Him, and are the effects of his mercy; for He is the giver of all goodness: “^h *He made all things, and for him alone they are and were created.*”

Well

^e Acts xvii. 28. ^h Colossians i. 16. Revelation iv. 11.

Well may we join the Psalmist in his devout rhapsody, "O Lord our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world; thou hast set thy glory above the Heavens. For when I consider the Heavens, even the works of thy fingers; the Moon and the Stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Thus from a sense of our own weakness, and numberless imperfections, as well as from motives of gratitude, we should be led to obey the commandments of God, and to adore, and give Him the praise and the glory for ever and ever. The meanest, the poorest, the most miserable, has a material reason for thanking and praising the Author of his being, who by giving him life, has fitted him for eternity; has made him capable of enjoying happiness without end, and great beyond description, or imagination.

It is then our duty to love God, and to keep his commandments, because he has ordered us to do so, and because He is worthy of our love and obedience, and entitled to them on every account.

Secondly, It is our interest to conform to the law of God, as delivered to us in the Scriptures, because by it we shall be judged. Our happiness in the next world will be proportioned to the degree in

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which

which we have observed, or neglected it. Let us consider what are the most obvious and most general rules belonging to this law, and then let us examine ourselves, and endeavour to find out where we have been most deficient.

The first, and most natural duty of religion, must be the acknowledgment, and consequently the worship of a superior Being. The first and great commandment of the Christian religion is “^{*} *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” Now if from the consideration of the attributes of God, of his Power, his Justice, and his Mercy, we can be brought to possess this love, we cannot fail to worship and adore Him, and to pour forth our acknowledgments of his superintendant care and goodness, in prayer and thanksgiving: for “¹ *out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.*” When therefore we do not feel a willingness to give God “^m *the honour due unto his name, and to worship him with a holy worship,*” we must be conscious that we are deficient in our duty, as laid down in the first and great commandment. We cannot love God as we ought to love Him.

By this defect we are led directly to the breach of another general rule, “ⁿ *Remember the sabbath-day*

^{*} Matthew xxii. 37.

¹ Matthew xii. 34.

^m Psalm xxix. 2.

ⁿ Exodus xx. 8.

" day to keep it holy." I shall not now enter into all the reasons for observing this law, but only remind you, that by the neglect of it, we lay ourselves open to the following sentence. " *Verily I say unto you, till Heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments*" (that is any one of the commandments which we perhaps may think the least) "*and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.*" On the other hand it is said that "*whosoever shall do, and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.*"

I must indeed observe, that to the neglect of this commandment of the Sabbath, may be attributed almost every other sin and folly. And here lies your principal error. By keeping away from the Lord's house, at those times which are expressly set apart for the worship of God, when his law is read and enforced, and which from almost unavoidable necessity, are the only opportunities you can have of learning your duty, you wilfully remain ignorant of it. And have therefore a double crime to answer for, the crime of ignorance, and the crime of disobedience. If you could be prevailed on to consider the necessity of being religious, and to reflect on the benefits which are most certainly annexed to a vir-

tuous and holy course of life; you would be no longer idle and careless in a matter of such consequence. Let me intreat your serious attention to a few suggestions on this subject, with which I shall conclude.

We cannot deny the necessity, nor the importance of a religious life, when we are told that "*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" Nor can it be a matter of indifference to us, what will become of our immortal spirits, our souls, when they take leave of their present earthly tabernacle. Whether they will be called to a place in that kingdom, where dwell eternal peace, and love, and joy, or whether they will be consigned over to a state of endless and utter darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is the point. This is the alternative. St. Paul's prayer for his hearers was, "*that they might be saved.*" Such is mine sincerely for you. But there must be the concurrence of your own prayers, and your own endeavours, to secure this chief and particular end of man, his eternal Salvation.

We certainly were not created merely for the few years that are generally allotted us in this life. We should have the prospect of immortality constantly before our eyes; and if this were the case,

we

we could hardly avoid being influenced by the hopes of obtaining a glorious one. The means of obtaining it are afforded to all, and are fully and clearly pointed out to us in the Scriptures. From them we learn, that the only means of securing a happy and glorious immortality, is an adherence to the commands of Jesus Christ. Since "*there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" And if we call ourselves Christians, we must live and act like Christians. For "*except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,*" in vain do we give ourselves so exalted a title, "*and in vain do we hope to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*"

The present advantages of a religious life, may be no small temptation to the practice of it. For first, we must know, that whatever may be our situation, however great or prosperous, without innocence in all our intentions, without honesty in all our actions, it is impossible for us to enjoy ease and tranquillity of mind: and without peace of mind, we must know, that we cannot be happy. But, while we have no bad designs, no guilt to upbraid ourselves with, we may have every reason to hope that God will pardon the errors and frailties, almost inseparable from our nature; and we may expect to meet with that inestimable reward in the

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^a Acts iv. 12. ^f Matthew v. 20.

next world, which is promised to the pure in heart; even to be admitted to the presence and sight of God. “ *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*”

The present advantages of a religious life will farther appear, if we consider, that the fruits of righteousness are those virtues in public and in private which enable us to live with decency, credit and comfort. Such as honesty, temperance, industry, prudence, civility, with many others. A man possessing these qualities, runs very little risk of being disregarded in any station, high or low. Whereas, no one would trust, or employ, a known drunkard, a swearer, a liar, a cheat, or in short a person notorious for wickedness in any shape, if those of a contrary character were to be found. An honest, a sober, an industrious, a civil person, will scarce ever miss of friends: or if this should be the case, he has at all times the comfort of knowing that he has a friend in Heaven “ *Who sticketh closer than a Brother.*”

The first great and general rule by which we judge of men in these particulars, is according to their observance or neglect of the worship of the Almighty. When we perceive any one regular in his attendance at the house of Prayer, and constant in

in his devotion, we immediately and naturally conclude that he is actuated by a desire of making himself acceptable to God, and that he is willing to guide himself by his law. It is indeed impossible for them who study the Scriptures, or hear them read, to do so, and not be the better for it. As to our discourses, to use the words of a great and good Divine "*Such is the dignity of the subject, that we must sink beneath it; but such is its usefulness and importance, that it is scarcely possible to treat it seriously, without saying something that must have a good effect on a well-disposed mind.*"

On the other hand, they who appear entirely neglectful of their duty to God, who never "*revere his sanctuaries;*" who never join in the public worship of Him, nor enter his courts with praise, who never attend the divine Service of the church, (unless when some immediate sensual benefit invites them,) in such we never expect to meet with any of the lesser virtues of human life. For it is a plain deduction, that he that loveth not God, keepeth not his sayings. "*He that hath my commandments, (says our Saviour,) and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.*"

I have thus endeavoured to prove, that it is both our duty and interest to serve God. And we must look

* Leviticus xix. 30. * John xiv. 21, 24.

look on public worship as the source of our obedience. It is a duty strictly enjoined us, and we shall therefore have as much to answer for our neglect of it, as of any other commandment.

The present Season seems particularly to invite all such as have been deficient in this, or in any other circumstance, to correct and amend their lives. When we contemplate the wonderful means of salvation, and that He who afforded us those means, made his appearance at this time on the earth. It surely is a season of joy, that is of religious and innocent joy; such joy as our blessed Redeemer says "**no man shall take from us:*" and ought therefore to be employed in more than ordinary acts of worship, love, and gratitude.

The day is at hand, when we shall commemorate the greatest blessing Mankind ever received,—the birth of our Saviour Christ,—in the highest act of Christian worship. Let each then in the intermediate time so prepare himself by proper humiliation, repentance, and resolutions of amendment; that we may all be ready on that day, to devote ourselves with sincere hearts, to the service of God for the future.

And may God grant us that assistance, for which we may have reason to hope, if we first do our endeavour, and show a willing mind.

SERMON

* John xvi. 22.

S E R M O N I.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PSALM cxxii. 1.

*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the
house of the Lord.*

FROM these words I shall offer to your consideration some few reasons, why we should frequently and regularly attend at Church; and shall likewise enumerate some particular advantages arising from it.

The necessity and propriety of assembling publicly to worship the supreme Author of our being, cannot be better illustrated, than by taking a view of the different duties, which are comprised in the pious invitation mentioned in the text “*Let us go into the house of the Lord.*” And of these we are fully and judiciously reminded, in the exhortation at the commencement of the church-service.

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We are first called upon, "*to confess our manifold sins and wickedness, with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end that by the mercy of Almighty God, we may obtain forgiveness of them.*"

That there is not a more serious, or a more material duty than confession, we may learn from the holy Scriptures. Since, "*a if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" To pretend to dissimble, or cloke our sins before the face of that God, "*from whom no secrets are hid,*" not only serves to increase the number of them, but is one of the greatest instances of our folly: for we read, "*b That God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*" And again, "*c He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.*" St. Paul also tells us "*d that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" In other words, that confession is one of the principal means, by which salvation is to be obtained.

We may easily believe it to be a principal and leading act of devotion, if we view it in its most extensive light. For in the first place, by confession,

^a John i. 8.

^b Ecclesiastes xii. 14.

^c Proverbs xxviii. 13.

^d Romans x. 10.

fession, particularly by public confession, we openly
 acknowledge our belief of a God, and express our
 dependance on Him. Secondly, a candid, unre-
 served, and humble confession, such as we are di-
 rected to make, must necessarily be accompanied
 with contrition, or sorrow for our offences. This
 is indeed the primary motive, by which we are sti-
 mulated to an acknowledgement of them: for if we
 did not repent of our crimes, we should hardly e-
 ver voluntarily confess them. But it is by an uneasi-
 ness of mind, an inward compunction, that we are
 led to disburden our consciences by confession. It
 is the first reparation that can be made: and to an
 ingenuous person, there is a great and real satis-
 faction attending it.

It is also a duty, from the necessity of perform-
 ing which, none can be exempt. "*We have all*
" left undone, those things which we ought to have
" done; and we have done those things which we ought
" not to have done." The very best of us are so far
 removed from perfection, as to make at least the
 acknowledgement of our unworthiness of God's
 care and protection, a duty incumbent on us all.—
" Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?"—

The infirmities of our nature, and our proneness
 to evil, give us continual cause for the duty of
 confession. It must therefore constantly form a
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part of private, as well as of public devotion. * St. James exhorts us to confess our faults one to another, and pray for one another; that by this means we may reciprocally administer and receive comfort and advice, and assist each other in the great work of salvation. Among the Israelites you will find, that confession almost always accompanied sacrifice: † and we read that the Jews came from all parts, in order to confess their sins to John the Baptist. It also appears that confession was a necessary preparative to baptism: “ *They were baptized of Him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*”

Thus does the Scripture teach us the necessity of disclosing our sins and wickedness to our heavenly Father. More particularly is it recommended to us “ *when we assemble and meet together, to render thanks for the great benefits we have received at his hands.*” And this leads us to consider thanksgiving as another necessary purpose of our frequenting the House of the Lord. This alone must furnish every one with sufficient reason for the observance of so essential and grateful a duty. Nature will dictate even to the most barbarous and uncivilized, that whence benefits are received, thanks are due. To whom are we so much indebted, as to that God, who has first brought us into life, and has thereby given us the means and opportunity

* James v. 16.

† Matthew iii. 5, 6.

tunity of obtaining perpetual happiness; and for our present support, has furnished us "*with every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the whole earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed?*" Whence come the necessaries, and whence the superfluities of life, but from Him alone, who "*hath opened his hand, and filled all things living with plenteousness?*" These considerations of God's mercy and goodness, should always be united with those of his power and justice; and then we should love, and fear, and obey Him as we ought.

Farther, when we thus meet to send forth the public voice of thanksgiving, we are exhorted to add our petitions for those things which are necessary both for the soul and body. We pray that God would vouchsafe to accept our prayers, and that our faith and obedience may be strengthened and confirmed, by the assistance of his almighty grace. We also pray that our honest endeavours to procure the necessaries and comforts of life, may be crowned with success. In all things submitting to the wisdom of Him, "*who seeth not as we see,*" and who knoweth what we have need of, that is, what is expedient for us, much better than we do ourselves.

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* Psalm cxlv. 16.

* 1 Samuel xvi. 7.

Our Church has thus wisely combined in her service, these several duties of confession, thanksgiving, and petition. We must know, that by the exercise of these duties in public, we particularly set forth the praise of our Creator. We become examples of holiness, and thus happily promote the cause of religion and virtue. We may make ourselves the happy instruments of converting many, and bringing them to faith and repentance: for which St. James tells us to our comfort, that
*“¹ He who converts a sinner from the error of his way,
 “ shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”*

This may be placed among the advantages arising from an open and public profession of our faith: some of which shall be now enumerated, as was proposed.

The first is pointed out to us: that by attending on those places which are set apart for the worship of the Almighty, we have the benefit of hearing his most holy word. A benefit, that extends, and is serviceable to all. By this means, the most illiterate may become acquainted with their duty. They hear the injunctions which God has laid on those, who are willing to be his servants and children. They hear the promises He has made to such as follow those injunctions, and the threats

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¹ James v. 20.

which He has denounced against the disobedient. They have read to them, the examples which are recorded in the holy Scriptures, of those who having placed their confidence in God, were not disappointed; and of those who disregarded his word, and were punished.

The Scripture, properly called the word of God, is the great rule of our life, by which we may learn so to conduct ourselves, as to obtain the favour and blessing of God in this world, and in that which is to come. “**Wherewithal (says holy David) shall a young man cleanse his way? even by ruling himself according to thy word:*” That is, the word of God. “*†Seek ye out of the book of the law of the Lord, (says the Prophet Isaiah,) and read.*” That ye may endeavour to possess that wisdom, and that knowledge, whose price is above rubies.

Unhappily there are some, who through neglect, or a want of sufficient means to acquire a necessary and proper education, are unable of themselves, to gain any profit by studying the book of life: and wherewithal shall they cleanse their way? How shall they who cannot read, glean any instruction from that volume, which was written to make us wise unto salvation, but by taking every opportunity of hearing it read to them; that thus they may

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acquaint

* Psalm cxix. 9. † Isaiah xxxiv. 16.

acquaint themselves with God and his laws, and be at peace with Him. Frequenting church is almost the only means they have of attaining to that most salutary knowledge; the knowledge of their duty to God, and to man. Let such then who remain in wilful ignorance, having the means of instruction so readily in their power, consider, that their ignorance cannot be imputed to them as a misfortune, but as a sin.

As another inducement to a constant attendance at the house of the Lord, we may have reason to hope, that when we perform the duty of prayer in communion with others, our prayers will be particularly efficacious: since God has promised “*to honour them, who honour Him.*” Now it is certain that we do more honour to God, and to religion, by confessing our sins, by returning thanks, and by offering up our petitions, in public, than we can by the exercise of the same duties in private. By the first (public confession) as was observed in the beginning of this discourse, we declare our belief of a supreme Being: by the second (public thanksgiving) we acknowledge his goodness manifested in the blessings we have received at his hands; and thereby give a proof of our gratitude, the most becoming of all virtues, and indeed the source of all. By the third and last (public petition) we profess

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our belief of God's power, and our dependance on his promises.

Again, by joining in the public prayers of the church, we have the advantageous opportunity of making use of those prayers, which in our incomparable liturgy, are so fitly adapted to every occasion.

It is not every one who has the happy faculty of expressing himself so clearly, or so decently at all times, as the nature of prayer requires. Here then we have a most excellent form prescribed for every purpose, consonant in all respects to the word of God, and entirely free from enthusiasm or superstition. In the house of prayer, each partakes of the prayers of the whole congregation; whence some benefit may be derived, as we are taught "*to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all men:*" and we know that "*the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous avail much.*"

To conclude. A constant attendance on the public worship of God, is so expressly commanded, that they who neglect it, cannot by any means be accounted his servants. Many there are, who like the young man in the Gospel, appear desirous of obtaining eternal life, and like him seem willing to do any thing that they may obtain it. And though

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° 1 Timothy ii. 1. ° James v. 16.

in other respects they are apparently blameless; industrious, honest, sober, careful, and attentive to their business, (rather indeed too much so; for they often observe the less and omit the weightier matters of the law) still they reject this one thing needful. Whilst they are in great measure reaping the fruits of their labour, and enjoying all the necessities of life, [which may be considered as the present reward of virtue] they seem totally regardless of the hand that bestows them, and live, “*as having no hope; and without God in the world.*” So that the works of industry, honesty, and sobriety, which are of themselves meritorious, cannot be accounted for righteousness to them.

The amazing stress the Psalmist lays on visiting the Lord's house, and the delight he took in it, sufficiently bespeaks it a duty of great importance. “*Lord (says he) I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*” “*One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord; and to visit his temple.*” In the text he expresses his joy, that the people who had long lived in neglect of God's worship, were now desirous of adopting the properest method of pursuing it.

† Ephesians ii. 12. † Psalm xxvi. 8. † Psalm xxvii. 4.

it. " *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*"

Let me beseech you, to consider seriously what has been said. And remember, that if we expect to receive the full reward of piety, we must be uniform in the practice of it. We must not neglect some duties, for the sake of others: but must endeavour to allot a proper time for all, and be punctual in the performance of each. So that " *all things may be done decently, and in order.*" If we hope to experience the blessings of God in future, let us at least be so grateful as to acknowledge those we have already received. " *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,*" " *and into his courts with praise.*" By no means make the frivolous excuses some do, for absenting themselves from this holy place; which pass indeed for excuses, but that they will be accepted at the throne of grace, is more than any one can even venture to hope, unless as the Apostle says it be " *against hope.*"

There is, and there must be, " *a time for every purpose.*" The duties of this present life must be fulfilled, and a blessing will certainly attend the proper

* 1 Corinthians xiv. 40.

† Psalm xcv. 2.

‡ Psalm c. 3.

¶ Romans iv. 18.

‡ Ecclesiastes iii. 1.

proper discharge of them: provided we do not forget the far more important concerns of the next. If one, must at any time give way to the other, every wise person would consult the welfare of his eternal soul, before that of his perishable body. In the character of a good man, these duties are by reason so happily united, that to make that desirable character complete, a due attention to both must be observed. A man may be morally good, without being religious; but he cannot be truly religious, without being moral. And without religion, *"without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."* What morality would teach to a heathen, is doubly enforced upon us, by the light of the gospel. In a word, if we would enjoy the good things of this world with true satisfaction, and peace of mind, we must *"first seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."*

7 Hebrews xiii. 14.

2 Matthew vi. 33.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

GEN. xxviii. CHAP. and part of the 17 Verse.

How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.

PUBLIC worship is a duty of much higher concernment than many seem to imagine; and it may be offered as an argument in favour of it, that it has received the assent of all nations and people.

Private devotion is at all times necessary and proper, and peculiarly serviceable to the individual. But we must also glorify God, by “^a letting our light shine before men:” and manifesting to the world, that we are not ashamed of our profession, should endeavour, by an open avowal of our faith,
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^a Matthew v. 16.

and every example of holiness, to bring others to the truth.

For although, as I just observed, great is the benefit of private prayer, yet, we cannot possibly do that honour to God, and to religion, in our closet, as when we join the public assembly of those, who meet to praise Him, who has promised to bless with his presence, places set apart for his worship; and that “^b where two or three are gathered together *in his name, there will He be in the midst of them.*”

And this surely ought to inspire every one who approaches his holy temple, with awe and reverence. Who that considers while he is in this house, that he is more immediately in the sight, and in the presence of the God of Heaven, of his Maker, and eternal Judge, but must feel a more than common pious dread and respect! sufficient one would imagine, to prevent that inattention, that levity and indecency of behaviour, too often the disgrace of a protestant congregation. Where some sit, some kneel, and others stand, all at the same time: so that a stranger would either suppose, that every kind of ceremony was abolished among us, or would be extremely puzzled to find out by which method he could best show his respect for the religion, according to the custom of its professors.

^b Matthew xviii. 20.

I now therefore proceed to observe, that however necessary and commendable the attendance on the public worship of God may be, yet, that it is not merely from frequenting this place we shall reap any benefit, unless we come hither with that sincerity, and true devotion of mind, which will enforce a behaviour suitable to the occasion. By which we may evince, that we have some real meaning, and intention of making ourselves acceptable to God, and a desire of worshipping Him, with a holy worship.

Our Saviour (who came to fulfill the Mosaic law, and not to destroy it: which law was not meant to be permanent, nor to be otherwise considered, than as a type, or prefiguration of a better, and more lasting covenant) scarce any where enjoins ceremonies: but taught, that the most essential worship God requires, is the sacrifice of the heart and mind. And that “*they who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*”

Conformably to this doctrine, the reformed church, of which we are members, has long dropt all ceremonies, which might have the least tendency to superstition or idolatry. Notwithstanding this “*some sort of form, or external worship, may make a part of religion, and a very necessary and*”
“*essential*”

“ John iv. 24.”

*“essential one too, when we conceive mankind to be
 “united in the same holy Society, and forming one body
 “of a church, or religion of what nature soever.”*

The method of public worship set forth in our liturgy, seems to be the most sensible and natural that could possibly have been contrived. This, it is the indispensable duty of every one, punctually to observe. Which would be the case more than it is, if people would first consider,

The place they were in. *“That it is none other
 “but the house of God. And secondly,*

For what purpose they were assembled. *“That
 “it is the gate of Heaven.”* That is, we must remember, that public worship forms a part, and no inconsiderable part, of that obedience, by which we hope to facilitate our eternal welfare. It is the gate to Heaven and everlasting happiness, in the same sense that our Saviour has called Himself *“the door,”* and *“the way.”* *“^d I am the door,
 “by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”* *“^e I
 “am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man
 “cometh to the Father, but by me.”* All which means, that there is no other method of gaining an entrance into Heaven, but believing in Christ, and obeying his commands. In this sense does the patriarch stile any spot or place appropriated to the worship

^d John x. 9.

^e John xiv. 6.

worship of God, the gate, or the road to Heaven: frequenting it, being a necessary means of obtaining a seat in those mansions of peace and love.

We find it very early intimated, that a peculiar and becoming respect was due, to all places that were dedicated to the service of God. "*Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary,*" was among the first commandments given to the children of Israel: and it is often repeated. Before this indeed are we taught, that so greatly does the place, where God vouchsafes to manifest Himself, partake of his purity, and with such reverence and humility is it to be approached, that Moses received a direct order "*to take off his shoes,*" before the Almighty invested him with his commission, "*because the place whereon he stood was holy ground:*" so rendered by the presence of Him who is holiness itself.

It must be the height of inconsiderateness, not to call it by a harsher term, that can suffer a person to

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^f Leviticus xxvi. 2.

^g Exodus iii. 5. This appears to have been a token of humility, and thence a necessary part of worship; for when David fled from Jerusalem to avoid the conspiracy formed by Absalom, as he ascended Mount Olivet, in order to worship, to humble himself, and to beg the protection of God "*he went bare foot.*" 2 Samuel, xv. 30. The same ceremony is mentioned in other places.

rush into the dwelling place of the Lord of hosts, with the same carelessness and indifference he would enter a place of entertainment. The audience probably of the latter might command decorum! But shall we pay any regard to man, which we would deny to God? when we are called into ceremonial company here, are not the punctilios of time, of dress, and of behaviour, duly considered and observed? and shall these circumstances be thought of little, or of no consequence, when we repair to the habitation of the Most High? if we can attend to the dictates of formality, and respect, and are able to refrain from any unbecoming, or indecent action, in the presence of an earthly superior; let us consider, how much more necessary, how much more important such a behaviour is, when we come purposely, and directly to address ourselves to the Lord of Heaven and earth, the Author of our being, the Giver of all we possess, to him in whose hands are the issues of life and death; indeed if our hearts and inclinations lead us hither, a proper behaviour will not be wanting.

Let us not forget where we are. "*This is none other but the house of God.*" Well may we exclaim with Jacob "*How dreadful is this place!*" The word "*dreadful*" does not here signify, "*terrifying*," or "*dismaying*:" but rather, "*awful, venerable*," raising in our minds such ideas as will oblige us to en-

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ter with consideration, reverence, and love. With that “^h perfect love which casteth out every fear,” except the fear of offending, for that can never be separated from humanity.

Let us now in the second place consider, that “*this is the gate of Heaven.*” In other words, that an observance of the duties which are comprised in public worship, is a necessary part of our duty to God. The business therefore we come on, if we are sincere, must certainly influence our behaviour, and infuse a proportionable degree of respect and attention. It is a concern by no means of a trifling nature. All are interested in it alike. Here, every distinction of birth, title, or fortune, is at an end. And if we could suppose that God was a respecter of persons, less in one place than in another, this surely must be the place. But “¹ He regardeth not the rich more than the poor, for they all are *the work of his hands.*”

Here we assemble to lay open our hearts before the Almighty, by the most humble, sincere, and unreserved confession of all our sins, whether of commission or neglect: to supplicate his pardon of them, and that He would be graciously pleased to afford us the assistance of his grace, by which we

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may be enabled to withstand temptation for the future. To acknowledge every blessing we have received at his hands, and to return Him our unfeigned thanks for the same. We beg that He would so strengthen our faith, and pour into our hearts such a love of virtue, that we may have some reason to hope for a continuance of his mercies.

We here likewise give our public assent to every article of our faith; the necessity of which seems at present more urgent than ever: as nothing is so likely to stop the voice of Schismatics, or the expansion of any false doctrine, as such frequent and open proofs of our unanimity and concord. Here we acknowledge the supremacy of the God of Heaven, and manifest our reliance on the merits and intercession of our blessed Saviour.

As to public thanksgiving, it is but an act of justice to return thanks publicly, for those mercies which have been, and are conspicuous to the world: it is ascribing to the Lord the honour due unto his name. “*Tell it out among the heathen,*” says holy David, “*that the Lord is King, and that it is He who hath made the round world so fast, that it cannot be moved; and how that he shall judge the people righteously.*” By attending the public worship of God, we endeavour to make some atonement for

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our numberless offences, by humbling ourselves before Him and offering Him that kind of service, with which we hope and think He will be most pleased.

Here we meet to promote the welfare of our souls, as well as the glory and honour of God and of religion: and for this it is expedient, that when we lift up our hands, our hearts be also lifted up with them. And that during the performance of these duties, uniformity and decency may be preserved, a certain method of worship has been pointed out and established, with the utmost wisdom, reasonableness and propriety.

By this we are taught, what indeed nature and common sense would dictate, that the properest posture for confession, or supplication, is kneeling; as expressive of the greatest humility. Thus "*Daniel kneeled on his knees three times a-day and prayed:*" we have likewise the example of our blessed Lord, who in the garden of Gethsemane "*kneeled down and prayed.*"

When we rehearse the articles of our belief it is surely proper to be on our feet, that our concurrence may be published in as open a manner as possible; and that we may all appear to belong to the same community.

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¹ Daniel vi. 10.

² Luke xxii. 41. Matthew xxvi. 36.

community. And in order to fix our attention, and draw us to a proper participation of the different duties, several repetitions and responses are enjoined us: by these also we declare a congruity of opinion.

While I am endeavouring to enumerate the ceremonies (for such they may certainly be called) in our church service, let me not forget that animating one of Psalmody: for the antiquity and usage of which we need only refer to Scripture. There we read, that ¹Moses with the children of Israel sang a song of thanksgiving, on their miraculous escape from the Egyptians. When Jahaziel prophesied that the people of Judah should prevail over the Moabites and others who came against them to battle; Jehoshaphat the king ²*appointed singers unto the " Lord,"* to praise and magnify Him, for such an intimation of his assistance. Solomon says ³*" The Righteous sing and rejoice."* And what an elevated expression is that in Job, where the Lord speaks to him out of the whirl-wind, and asks him, ⁴*" Where wast thou, when I laid the foundation of the earth? " When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"* Do we not read that ⁵*" at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises un-*

" to

¹ Exodus xv. 1. ² 2 Chronicles xx. 21.

³ Proverbs xxix. 6. ⁴ Job xxxviii. 4, 7.

⁵ Acts xvi. 25.

“ to God in the prison, and the prisoners heard them?”

And lastly, has not the Son of God himself given us an example of the propriety (I may say, from so great authority, the indispensable necessity) of this duty? of whom it is recorded, that before He and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives, after the solemn ceremony of the last supper, “*They sang a hymn.*” “Hence we may naturally conclude, “that singing is an external action which God has “appointed, not only to express the inward joy “and thankfulness of our heart;” but that it may also have its place among the most serious acts of devotion.

With all this it is absolutely the duty of every one to comply, to the utmost of his ability: that is, unless he is prevented by natural infirmity. For instance, if it is painful to kneel, we must offer up our prayers in that manner, which leaves our minds most at ease, and our thoughts unperplexed. And they who cannot sing, without interrupting the harmony, may still show their approbation, and respect for that part of the service by paying proper attention to those who do.

But they who refuse to give any of these public testimonies of their profession; if, while some are kneeling,

kneeling, others are sitting carelessly and inattentively; they surely cannot be said to promote the glory of God, or of religion: in short it may be looked on as a denial of their faith, and therefore they subvert a most material end of public worship.

Let us not be deficient in any of these particulars, either from a false and mistaken modesty, or from a want of zeal and sincerity. The former is an error infinitely below the dignity of a Christian, beyond which the meanest capacity may soar: and an excuse that will little avail us, for let us remember that our Saviour has said “ *Whosoever is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed.*” And “ *whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.*” The latter, (want of zeal or sincerity) is the only reason that should make us more earnest to implore, as the Apostles did, increase to our faith, and stability to our virtue.

Public worship, rightly considered, is a duty of a very serious nature, and is by no means to be undertaken without proper thought and reflection. We are not to come to this place mechanically or negatively; merely because it is customary, or because

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* Mark viii. 38.

* Matthew x. 32, 33.

we cannot employ our time any otherwise. But we must come to present ourselves before the Lord; and to a mind properly prepared, the observance of this duty, may in some measure, appear typical of that Judgement to which we shall be called. Here, all our actions pass in review before God; here, the sincerity of our contrition, and of our thirst for future godliness, will be proved by our behaviour: and here we meet in a degree with the reward of our virtue, in the satisfaction of a good conscience. That satisfaction which the cheerful performance of any of God's commandments will never fail to create.

Another argument yet remains, and that is, the threats which we may find denounced in Scripture, against those who in any manner profane the temple of God, "Because" says God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "because thou hast defiled my sanctuary, with all thy detestable things, and with all thy abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee, neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have pity." Now by the defilement or profanation of this house, which is the temple of God, and the place where his honour dwelleth, may be understood any improper or irreverent action in it. When we are unmindful of the dignity of the place; when we refuse to join in prayer, or in any part of the service; if

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we draw off the attention of those who are properly and seriously disposed; in short, if we suffer our thoughts to wander, and forget the purpose of our coming hither, we may be said to profane both the Sabbath and the Sanctuary, and thereby lay ourselves open to the displeasure and wrath of God.

That none of these crimes may be laid to our charge, when we repair to the house of God, let us set our affections entirely on things above. We must consider the benefits arising from the proper performance of this duty, and the consequences attending the neglect of it. We must consider that we are not only soliciting temporal blessings, but endeavouring to procure a place in that kingdom which shall last for ever. We must look on this house as "*the gate of Heaven,*" at which we are to assemble with meekness and reverence, both on account of the sacredness of the place, and of our own imperfections. And God grant it may prove to us all the gate of righteousness and everlasting life.

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S E R M O N V.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

I COR. xi. CHAP. and the 29 Verse.

He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

THESE are the words, which for want of being understood, prevent many well-disposed persons from obeying the positive command of our Saviour, concerning what is commonly called the Sacrament, or Lord's Supper. He instituted it, and commanded us to celebrate it in remembrance of Him.

In the verses preceding the text, St. Paul recapitulates the manner, and the intention of this institution, in nearly the same words which the Evangelists have used. "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, He brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*"

"*This cup is the new Testament,*" that is, this cup is the sign of the Gospel covenant, of which

Christ is called the ^aMediator, and which is called the new covenant, to distinguish it from that covenant which God had formerly made with the Jews. Thus, the purposes for which the Lord's supper was ordained, were, as we are plainly told in our Church Catechism, "*To be a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.*" The effect of Christ's death being our eternal redemption, He was willing before He quitted the world, to leave some outward sign, or ceremony with his disciples; the frequent usage of which might bring to our minds that last great and merciful act of his, the laying down his life for our sakes, and preserve the benefits we derive thence, (namely, our eternal salvation,) constantly in our memories. He therefore appointed the ceremony of the Lord's supper, or more properly, of the Eucharist, which signifies an act of thanksgiving, or a commemoration of benefits. "*For as oft*" continues the Apostle, "*as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come.*" That is, as often as we worship God, and offer up our thanks in the manner thus prescribed, we acknowledge ourselves to be the disciples of Jesus Christ; we confess that we believe He died for our sins, and that we shall be saved through faith in his name. "*Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup*"

"of

^a Hebrews xii. 24.

" of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body
 " and blood of the Lord." This, and the verse I
 have chosen for my text, are so nearly alike, that
 one explanation will take in both. But before I
 proceed to this I must observe, that whenever we
 read the Scriptures, and particularly any of the E-
 pistles, we should consider the persons to whom the
 passages we read allude, and the occasion of them.
 In the present instance, the following particulars
 are not unworthy our notice.

The Corinthians were excessively wealthy. And the
 consequence was (as it generally is with wealthy
 nations, or individuals,) that they were remarka-
 bly luxurious, and given up to all manner of sin
 and debauchery : so much as to become proverbial
 for their lasciviousness. And a ^b Corinthian woman,
 was but another name for a woman of bad charac-
 ter. St. Paul however had many seeming con-
 verts, and had established a Church at Corinth.
 But it is not to be wondered, that people of so dis-
 solute a turn, and living in so profligate a city,
 should be negligent and irregular in their religious
 duties. Accordingly we find that they had many
 divisions and contentions among them^c. After re-
 prehending them on this account, and for many other
 enormities, the Apostle proceeds in the eleventh
 Chapter to reprove their indecent and unworthy
 participation of the Lord's supper. "*When ye come*

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" together

^b See Whitby's preface to the Corinthians.

^c Chapter i. 11.

“ *together therefore in one place,*” (or as it is in the original for this purpose, that is, the purpose which you pretend, namely, that of celebrating the Eucharist,) “ *this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God and shame them that have not? What shall I say to You? Shall I praise You in this? I praise you not.*”

It appears that they had feasts which they kept at the same time, and in the same place, that they met together in order to celebrate the Lord’s Supper^d. And from the terms of reproach the Apostle has here used, we may readily imagine that they were far from being worthy partakers of that solemn meal. St. Paul therefore, after reminding them of the nature and cause of the institution, adds, “ *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.*”

The unworthiness of the Corinthians we see proceeded from a particular cause, to which these words have a reference: which will appear more clearly if we transpose them. Thus we may read “ *He that eateth and drinketh, not discerning the Lord’s body, eateth and drinketh unworthily.*” They (the Corinthians) joined other feasts to the Eucharist, and

^d See Whitby, Poole’s Annotations, and Calmer’s Dictionary.

and did not discriminate, with proper devotion and solemnity, between the one and the other. And thence proceeded their unworthiness. Wherefore, although I would by no means hint, that we may not be unworthy partakers, it is impossible for us to become so, for the same reason they did. Because as the other ceremonies which they had, do not exist among us, we have not the same temptation. But as the words of the text have been so far a stumbling-block to numbers, as to deter them from the performance of a duty, which is really indispensable; I shall now endeavour to make some observations on them, which I hope may be of use.

And first, some I fear from this caution of the Apostle's, have been led to think, that if they have ever committed sin, they cannot be worthy communicants. Others imagine, that if they should receive the holy sacrament, and be guilty of any sin afterwards, they should run the risk of incurring eternal punishment. But we cannot suppose that our Saviour would have instituted, and commanded the observance of any ceremony, which should be attended with such invincible difficulties. For if none but the perfect, if none but the immaculate can be thought worthy receivers, where shall we find any that are so? If this were the case, where is the efficacy of repentance? For if we think that we cannot by repentance, render ourselves worthy partakers of the holy communion, we surely can-

not think by this, or any other means, to render ourselves fit inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven. Such an idea as this, is indeed contrary to the whole tenour of our Lord's doctrine, and to the design of his coming. Himself declared, that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. And that they that are whole need not a Physician, but those that are sick†. Our Saviour commanded the rite we are speaking of, to be continually solemnised in remembrance of his death. And though it was appointed in the presence but of a few, yet the observance was certainly intended to be universal. Since He died not for the eleven only, but for the sins of the whole world. All therefore who profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, are necessarily bound to fulfil all his appointments; and particularly to commemorate that act, on which their hopes of future happiness entirely depend.

Since then there is an obligation on all christians to be partakers of the holy communion, it is not sin that can put it irremediably out of our power to become worthy partakers. For in this case, as I observed, none would be fit. “*§ Since all have sinned.*” Therefore says St. Paul, “*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*” Whence it appears that some preparation is necessary, previous to our receiving. Or rather indeed, that a particular frame of mind is necessary at the time that we receive. What this preparation, or
frame

* Matthew ix. 13. † Matthew ix. 12. § Romans iii. 23.

frame of mind is, the Scriptures do not say directly and in express terms. But we may easily infer what it is, not only from the whole doctrine of the Gospel, but from the nature of the ordinance itself. According to this, the last article of our church catechism has with great propriety reduced it to three heads:—repentance, faith, and charity. The question is, “*What is required of them who come to the Lord’s supper?*” The answer—“*To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.*” Thus, the same preparation, the same qualifications, which alone can give us any title to the benefits resulting from the death of our Saviour, are necessary to make us meet partakers of those outward signs, by which He ordered us to keep his death in remembrance.

If then we approach the table with an unfeigned sorrow for our past sins, and with a resolution of endeavouring to the utmost of our power, to avoid them for the future; if we have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ; that is, if we believe that Christ by his death has purchased our redemption, and that God will have mercy upon us, and accept our repentance through his merits and intercession; if we consider the purposes for which this sacrament was ordained, and have a thankful remembrance

remembrance of that one oblation. "^h *once offered.*"

And lastly, if we are in charity with all mankind; that is, if we bear no enmity towards any; for it is impossible we should love those who have materially injured us; but we may not bear them any ill-will, nor have any desires of revenge towards them; thus circumstanced, and in this disposition, we cannot be accounted unworthy communicants.

These are the fundamental principles of Christianity. These are duties incumbent on us at all times. If therefore by an habitual course of sin unrepented of, if by a total neglect and indifference concerning the means of salvation; if by cherishing a malicious and revengeful temper, a man remains unfit to be a partaker of the Lord's supper; he must be in a very dangerous state, nor can he think, if he considers, that he is by any means fit to be a partaker of the kingdom of God. "¹ If
 "any man say, I am a grievous sinner, and therefore
 "am afraid to come; why then do ye not repent, and
 "amend?" "^k Whoever lives in any wilful sin, cannot
 "safely come to the holy sacrament; nor, which I beg
 "you to observe, can he safely stay away. For as the
 "hypocrisy of professing amendment falsely at God's
 "table, is a great sin; so the profaneness of turning our
 "backs upon it, because we will not amend, is to the
 "full as great a one: and it is the merest folly in the
 " world

^h Hebrews ix. 28.

¹ See the exhortation at the Communion Service.

^k See Secker's Lectures on the Catechism.

“ world to chuse either, as the safer way ; for a wicked person can be safe no way. But let him resolve to quit his wickedness: and when he is thoroughly sure, so far as he can from a competent experience, that he hath resolved upon it effectually, then he may as safely receive, as he can say his prayers.” In short, if a man cannot by proper consideration put his mind in a fit state to receive the sacrament, he can hardly be in a disposition to address himself to the Almighty on any occasion whatever. When he does arrive at this happy temper, his former sinfulness, so far from being any obstacle, is one reason that should make him particularly desirous of sealing his repentance, by the reception of this sacrament of faith and love. “ ¹ *Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*”

We have considered the nature and end of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. We have seen that our Saviour Himself instituted it ; and it appears from its very nature that He intended it should be universally celebrated, by all his disciples. We have seen that the want of the ^m wedding garment of repentance and faith, can alone render us unworthy partakers of it. We have also considered by what means it is in our own power to become worthy

¹ Isaiah lv. 7.

^m Matthew xxii. 11.

thy. Let me therefore hope that you will reflect on these things.

They who have hitherto lived in the neglect of this positive command of our Saviour, and have been careless and deficient in other religious duties, may require a certain time, to examine their past lives; to endeavour by repentance to reconcile themselves to God; and to pray for the assistance of his grace towards their future amendment. Life however is uncertain: too great a delay may be dangerous; sincerity may do much; and where there is sincerity, there need be no fear.

But let such as attend constantly, and with sincerity on the public worship of God, and whose consciences do not accuse them of any wilful or habitual sin; let them I say remember, that as long as they refuse to accept this invitation of our blessed Redeemer's, they are considerably lessening the efficacy of their obedience in other respects.

It is not a harsh exaction; it is not an injunction of displeasure; but an invitation of love, from the same kind instructor who said, "*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Come all ye who are bending under the weight of transgressions, who are pressed down with trouble and afflictions; Come unto me with repentance and faith, and I will refresh you. "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" Eat this bread and drink of this cup, in remembrance that I gave my
body

body to be pierced, and my blood to be shed, for your sakes, that ye may be happy to all eternity—" *Do this as oft as ye drink it,*" with a grateful sense and acknowledgement of such benefits, and " *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" Such a request, and such benefits, surely demand our attention and compliance. Remember, that if it be a sin to receive unworthily; it is still a greater not to communicate, because ye will not endeavour to make yourselves worthy.

Let not the fear of falling into sin afterwards, deter you from the performance of so necessary a part of your duty; but recollect, that if you receive the Sacrament with proper consideration, and therefore worthily receive it; sin afterwards cannot alter the nature of things, nor make that worthy reception which is past, unworthy. Frailty is inseparable from mortality: nor can any thing while we are in this mortal state, make us wholly infallible. If we should break our resolutions, " *the only thing for us to do, is to lament our faults with deeper contrition, renew our good purposes more firmly, pray for help from above with more earnestness, watch over ourselves with more prudent care; then thankfully commemorate again God's pardoning love, and claim anew the benefit of his gracious covenant.*"

Come then, and lay down your sins at the foot of the Altar; " *Cast away from you all your transgressions*

* Isaiah i. 18. † See Secker's Lectures.

‡ Ezechiel xviii. 31.

"gressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and made
 "you a new heart, and a new spirit." Let us
 endeavour so to purify ourselves by the worthy recep-
 tion of those "creatures of bread and wine, which
 are but the representation of a perfect, sufficient,
 though conditional sacrifice; that the body of Christ
 may not have been broken, nor his blood shed, for
 us in vain.

Consider what has been said. And for assistance
 in your preparation, or for the removal of any scrup-
 les that may yet remain, I recommend to your so-
 rious perusal, that most excellent treatise called
 "*A companion to the Altar,*" which you will find
 in most Common Prayer Books. And God grant
 your endeavours may be so effectual, that the great
 neglect I have hitherto been sorry to observe, may
 no longer be visible among you.

"Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abun-
 "dantly above all that we can ask or think, according
 "to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory
 "in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages,
 "world without end."

* See the prayer of consecration in the communion
 service.

* Ephesians, iii. 20



THE END.